United Nations A/61/PV.56

General Assembly

Official Records

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Monday, 20 November 2006, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Agenda item 74 (*continued*)

Report of the International Criminal Court

Draft resolution (A/61/L.21)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on this agenda item at its 26th and 27th plenary meetings on 9 October 2006.

I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.21

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): I have the honour to introduce this morning the draft resolution entitled "Report of the International Criminal Court".

In addition to the list of countries contained in document A/61/L.21, the following countries have indicated their wish to be included as sponsors: Antigua and Barbuda, Burundi, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Congo, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Dominica, Gabon, the Gambia, Haiti, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, the Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, Uganda and Zambia. That brings the total number of sponsors of the draft resolution to 103.

On 9 October, the President of the International Criminal Court presented the second annual report of the International Criminal Court to this body. We had a very constructive and in depth debate then, and I do not want to repeat that discussion here today. Allow me, however, to highlight a few elements.

The establishment of the Court was the most significant development in recent years in our long and ongoing struggle to eradicate impunity. There can be no lasting peace without justice, and justice and peace are thus complementary requirements. In that regard, we will continue to strive for universal adherence to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We are therefore very pleased to welcome the countries that have recently become parties to the Rome Statute.

The annual report of the Court clearly demonstrates that the International Criminal Court is now fully operational. The judicial phase of its operations has started, involving both operations in the field as well as courtroom proceedings against the first accused to be tried. We are pleased that the Court has recently established a liaison office at the United Nations here in New York, which we hope will enhance the relationship between the two organizations and facilitate communication.

The International Criminal Court's report, as well as the debate in the General Assembly a few weeks ago, underlined the important role the International Criminal Court plays in our common multilateral system, which aims to end impunity and to establish the rule of law, to promote and encourage respect for human rights, and to restore and maintain international peace and security. The assistance given by the Court to the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the collaboration in the framework of the International

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Independent Investigation Commission are proof of that.

The President of the International Criminal Court, in his address to the General Assembly a few weeks ago, stressed the fact that cooperation between the Court and the United Nations and cooperation by States and international and regional organizations are fundamental to an effective and efficient functioning Court, especially in relation to the arrest and surrender of accused persons, the provision of evidence, the relocation of witnesses and the enforcement of sentences. We call on all States to support the Court's efforts in that regard. The continuous support of civil society deserves to be mentioned as well.

The draft resolution before us today serves three main objectives. First, it provides political support for the International Criminal Court as an organization, for its aims, as well as for the work it carries out.

Secondly, it underlines the importance of the relationship between the International Criminal Court and the United Nations, which the two organizations continue to build on the basis of the Relationship Agreement.

Lastly, it serves to remind States and international regional organizations of the need to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in carrying out its tasks.

The Netherlands hopes that the adoption of this draft resolution today will lead to even greater support for the International Criminal Court in its fight against impunity and its attempt to hold those accused of very serious crimes accountable for their actions.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.21. In connection with that draft resolution, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Chief, General Assembly Affairs Branch): In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.21, I wish to inform the General Assembly that by the terms of operative paragraphs 7 and 13 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would emphasize the importance of the full implementation of the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, which forms a framework for close cooperation between the two organizations and for consultation on matters of mutual interest pursuant to the provisions of that Agreement and in conformity with the respective provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Rome Statute, as well as the need for comprehensive information from the Secretary-General with respect to steps taken in the implementation of the Relationship Agreement and would take note of the decision of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court at its fourth session to hold its sixth session in New York in 2007, while recalling that, according to article 112, paragraph 6, of the Rome Statute, the Assembly of States Parties shall meet at the seat of the Court or at United Nations Headquarters, and would request the Secretary-General to provide the necessary services and facilities in accordance with the Relationship Agreement and General Assembly resolution 58/318 of 13 September 2004.

In accordance with the decision of the General Assembly contained in resolution 58/318, all expenses resulting from the provision of services, facilities, cooperation and any other support rendered to the International Criminal Court or the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, including under any arrangements that may be otherwise agreed under article 10 of the Relationship Agreement that may accrue to the United Nations as a result of the implementation of the Relationship Agreement, shall be paid in full to the Organization.

According to Article 10 of the Relationship Agreement just referred to,

> "[t]he United Nations agrees that, upon the request of the Court, it shall, subject to availability, provide on a reimbursable basis, or as otherwise agreed, for the purposes of the Court such facilities and services as may be required, including for the meetings of the Assembly of States Parties..., its Bureau or subsidiary bodies, including translation and interpretation services, documentation and conference services. When the United Nations is unable to meet the request of the Court, it shall notify the Court accordingly, giving reasonable notice".

Accordingly, under the terms of General Assembly resolution 58/318 and Article 10 of the Relationship Agreement, the implementation of the actions prescribed in the draft resolution, should it be adopted by the General Assembly, would not give rise to any financial implications for the United Nations.

The President: Before giving the floor to the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before a decision is taken on the draft resolution, allow me to remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Willson (United States of America): The concerns of the United States about the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court (ICC) are well known. They include the ICC's assertion of jurisdiction over nationals of States not parties to the Rome Statute, including United States nationals, and the lack of adequate oversight of the ICC's activities, including those of the Prosecutor, who may initiate cases without first seeking approval of the Security Council. Accordingly, the United States dissociates itself from consensus on draft resolution A/61/L.21.

Our concerns about the ICC are concerns about means, not about ends. We strongly support, and work actively to advance, international criminal justice and accountability for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. In this regard, we have been leading supporters of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, and of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We also accepted the Security Council's decision to refer to the ICC the serious crimes committed in Darfur.

We respect the views of the supporters of the ICC and understand that they would like the ICC to attain universal support. But we disagree with them about whether the ICC, as currently constituted under the Rome Statute, will effectively and appropriately promote those important objectives. As we have done in past years, we again made a good faith effort to work with supporters of the ICC to have this draft resolution include language acknowledging that there are legitimate differences of views among States about the ICC and recognizing the right of States to decide not to become parties to the Rome Statute. Again this year, supporters of the ICC have refused that reasonable request.

Today's draft resolution observes that effective cooperation and assistance by States, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations remains essential for the ICC to carry out its activities. Respecting the positions of all parties is essential to our efforts to find practical ways to work together and ensure accountability.

Today's draft resolution references the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the ICC and requests that the United Nations provide services and facilities to the ICC in connection with certain meetings that the ICC plans to hold. We underscore the importance in this regard of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 58/318, which decides that all expenses to the United Nations resulting from the provision of services, facilities, cooperation and any other support to the ICC under the Relationship Agreement shall be paid in full to the United Nations. This requirement that the United Nations must be reimbursed for all such assistance to the ICC must be strictly observed.

We note the request in paragraph 7 of today's draft resolution that the Secretary-General provide comprehensive information with respect to steps taken in the implementation of the Relationship Agreement. In that connection, we call on the Secretary-General to provide clear and timely information to the General Assembly on all assistance provided by the United Nations to the ICC and on the steps taken by the United Nations to secure reimbursement in full for the costs of such assistance, in accordance with resolution 58/318.

The United States will continue to be a leading advocate for international criminal justice and accountability for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. We regret that resolutions like the one to be adopted today hinder, rather than promote, cooperation among States in these efforts.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.21. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.21?

Draft resolution A/61/L.21 was adopted (resolution 61/15).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 74?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 47, 112, 113 and 149

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/90)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.24)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/383)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.24)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

The President: In connection with agenda item 113, the note by the Secretary-General, circulated as document A/61/383, transmits the report of the World Health Organization on enhancing capacity-building in global public health.

In connection with draft resolution A/61/L.24, I wish to draw the attention of members to a number of corrections, which are now being distributed in the Hall. Those corrections will be incorporated into the final version of the draft resolution.

We shall first proceed to take up draft resolution A/61/L.24. Thereafter, we shall proceed with the joint debate on agenda items 47, 112, 113 and 149.

Statement by the President

The President: I am very pleased that the Assembly has before it today a draft resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. This document is the result of a long, and at times difficult, process of consultations. We have finally concluded that important process in a spirit of true compromise.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their active and constructive participation in the consultation process on this important matter. In particular, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Ambassador Verbeke of Belgium and Ambassador Diarra of Mali for their strong and dedicated leadership in conducting the consultations, and to commend Mr. Ruiz Massieu Aguirre of Mexico for his tireless facilitation.

This draft resolution is an important milestone in realizing the vision set out by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit. The draft resolution, once adopted, will strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council as a central body for coordination, policy review, policy guidance and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for the implementation of international development goals. The draft resolution will also be an acknowledgement of the central importance of development as one of the principal pillars of the United Nations.

This draft resolution will enable the Economic and Social Council to launch the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum during the 2007 high-level segment of the Council, to be held in Geneva. Beginning in 2008, the Development Cooperation Forum will meet every other year in New York.

The draft resolution will also enable the Council to respond to humanitarian emergencies as and when they occur, by convening ad hoc meetings. That will help to make United Nations humanitarian responses more effective and efficient.

Furthermore, the draft resolution will bring into sharper focus the linkages between the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on countries emerging from conflict. I am confident that those new functions will put the Council at the centre of global efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. That is both a demanding responsibility and a tremendous opportunity for the Council to perform more effectively.

We have worked hard for nearly a year to reach agreement on strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. It is my sincere hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, so that the Economic and Social Council can carry out its new functions as mandated by our leaders at the 2005 World Summit.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/61/L.24, as corrected. In connection with the draft resolution, I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Chief, General Assembly Affairs Branch): I should like to inform members that in

connection with draft resolution A/61/L.24, as corrected, entitled "Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the Economic and Social Council as a Charter body, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

The paragraphs that would give rise to financial implications are operative paragraphs 2, 3, 8, 14, 18 and 19 of the draft resolution.

The conference-servicing implications are as follows.

First, the meeting referred to under subparagraph (a) of paragraph 2 — the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — has already been included in the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations. It is understood that there will be no change to the pattern of the special meeting — that is, one day, with two fully serviced plenary meetings, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; and four fully serviced round tables, either in the morning or in the afternoon.

Therefore, should the General Assembly adopt subparagraph (a) of operative paragraph 2, no additional resources would be required.

Secondly, the meetings referred to under subparagraph (b) of operative paragraph 2 and in operative paragraphs 3 and 8, that is, the annual high-level policy dialogue with international financial and trade institutions, the biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum, and the Council's convening of annual ministerial-level substantive reviews, will be held within the framework of the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. No additional parallel meetings will be required over and above the existing pattern of meetings. Therefore, should the General Assembly adopt subparagraph (b) of operative paragraph 2 and operative paragraphs 3 and 8, no additional resources would be required.

Thirdly, under subparagraph (c) of operative paragraph 2, on discussions on a theme from the economic, social and related fields; operative paragraph 14 on the need for ad hoc meetings on specific humanitarian emergencies; and operative paragraph 18, on ensuring the provision of full conference services to the Council for all meetings necessary to enable the Council to fulfil its strengthened mandate, it is our understanding that these meetings do not represent an increase over the total number of meetings reserved annually as a practice for the preparatory process of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and therefore would not require additional resources.

However, as advance planning is essential in ensuring the satisfactory provision of conference services as well as achieving cost-effectiveness, the exact dates of those meetings will need to be determined by consultations between the substantive secretariat and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Fourthly, under operative paragraph 19, on the meetings to facilitate the fulfilment of its newly assigned responsibilities for organizing the annual ministerial reviews, as referred to under subparagraph (b) of operative paragraph 2; and the Development Cooperation Forum, as referred to under operative paragraph 3, up to two weeks of meetings, it will be recalled that, in its resolution 60/246, the General Assembly, having considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, decided that such additional resources as may be necessary be reflected in the relevant performance report for the biennium 2006-2007.

Through advance planning and consultations between the substantive secretariat and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, it is anticipated that those meetings can be judiciously scheduled so that they can be accommodated from within existing resources.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of France on a point of order.

Mr. Pic (France) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to indicate that we would like to reserve the right to provide, in writing, requests to change the French translation of this draft resolution.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.24, entitled "Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council", as corrected.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.24, as corrected?

Draft resolution A/61/L.24, as corrected, was adopted (resolution 61/16).

The President: I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): The European Union (EU) attaches great importance to the strengthening and revitalizing of the Economic and Social Council, as set out in the World Summit Outcome Document. We would therefore like to express our strong support for the successful finalization of this resolution.

The European Union is pleased that the Economic and Social Council can now finally proceed with planning for the upcoming session of the Council and continue its work with reformed functions, as mandated by the World Summit Outcome Document and this resolution.

The European Union would like to express its appreciation to you, Madam President, and to the co-Chairmen — Mr. Verbeke, Ambassador of Belgium, and Mr. Diarra, Ambassador of Mali — for their leading role in contributing to the completion of this process. We would like also to extend our warmest compliments to the facilitator, Mr. Carlos Ruíz of Mexico.

In addition, we would like to thank all negotiation partners for the constructive spirit that kept up the momentum and enabled us to reach consensus on this important issue. The European Union hopes that this positive approach will also facilitate a timely agreement on the remaining questions during the resumed session of the Economic and Social Council and promote our efforts to adapt the work of the Council.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): The Group of 77 and China welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. With the adoption of this resolution, the United Nations has reaffirmed the role of the Economic and Social Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination in promoting the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields. As a principal body for coordination and policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues related to economic and social development, the Economic and Social Council will now be able to play its proper role.

The Group of 77 and China is pleased that the mandate from our leaders has been adhered to in accordance with the World Summit Outcome and that the Economic and Social Council has been strengthened through the creation of the biannual Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the new, strengthened role of the substantive session and the fact that the General Assembly has decided that the Development Cooperation Forum will, in the context of international economic and development cooperation, identify gaps, review trends and progress and provide policy guidelines and recommendations, with the aim being to enhance the implementation of internationally agreed development cooperation and to study the issues affecting the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

We therefore welcome the decision that the Development Cooperation Forum should undertake regular reviews and assessments of international economic and development policies and of their impact on development. That is a vital element that will enable the Economic and Social Council to play a major role in the efficient use of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that commitments and actions are effectively implemented in the context of international economic and development policies and cooperation.

The Group of 77 and China looks forward to the high-level deliberations at the annual ministerial review to evaluate progress and implementation by means of a cross-sectoral approach, focusing on thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, as well as to assess the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the resolution clearly and distinctly outlines the relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Economic and Social Council. That will enrich and enhance the work of the Peacebuilding

Commission in post-conflict development and reconstruction.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the recognition by Member States that there has been insufficient provision of conference services and substantive support to the Council's meetings, which has impeded the Council's ability to fulfil its mandate. The Group therefore welcomes the renewed recognition that the Council, as a Charter body, is entitled to convene meetings as and when needed, with full substantive support and conference services to facilitate its strengthened mandate, in particular when it relates to humanitarian emergencies.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for working with us in the final stages of this resolution. I would also like to thank the two Co-Chairs, the ambassadors of Mali and Belgium, and, of course, our tireless facilitator, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu Aguirre of Mexico, for their dedication, patience and hard work. We would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of our negotiating partners, who made it possible for us to adopt this important resolution by consensus.

Mr. Sen (India): We welcome resolution 61/16, on strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, and congratulate you, Madam President, on your leadership in bringing the negotiations on that resolution to a conclusion. Its adoption no doubt paves the way for the operationalization of the Council's new functions, namely, the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum, mandated by the 2005 World Summit.

With the adoption of this resolution, we have once again reconfirmed the role of the Economic and Social Council as the principal body within the United Nations for coordinating policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development. India has consistently maintained that it is primarily a question of political will — rather than of reinventing the Economic and Social Council — to enable the Council to effectively fulfil its mandate relating to oversight and system-wide coordination, with respect not only to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, but also to the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

We agree with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77, my colleague from South Africa, that the elements outlined in this resolution in the context of the Development Cooperation Forum will strengthen the Economic and Social Council, particularly with regard to its oversight and system-wide coordination functions. That will provide the Council with an opportunity to review trends and progress in international development cooperation and to provide policy guidance and recommendations. An important function of the Forum will be to undertake regular and periodic review and assessment of international economic policies and of their impact on development.

In the context of systemic issues, it is particularly important to implement the commitment to enhancing the ability of developing countries to participate meaningfully in decision-making, an important component of which is to assist developing countries in enhancing their capacity to assess the impact that policy changes have on them. While the industrialized countries have the capacity to make their own assessments, most of the developing countries do not have the resources to do so.

The situations in several developing countries amply demonstrate the impact of the structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Many on the verge of civil conflict not only have failed to benefit from those policies, but have plunged deeper into conflict. Also, in the case of many countries, the IMF bail-out packages did not work in the way predicted during the crisis.

Hence, there is a need for assessment of the disparity between predicted consequences and what actually happens. Given the lack of resources among developing countries, the deliberative discussions within the international economic institutions could be complemented if there were an independent body to evaluate their policies, as well as alternative proposals concerning their impact on developing countries and on development. The United Nations is best placed to do so. Detailed consideration in the Economic and Social Council, with policy guidance from the General Assembly, would be helpful.

We are confident that the Economic and Social Council, on the basis of the review and assessment of international economic policies and the international financial, monetary and trade policies of relevant institutions, will make recommendations where needed so that the necessary correctives can make the international economic environment supportive of development. Not only will that increase confidence in

and the legitimacy of international economic governance; it may also lead to better economic governance that may benefit both the developing and developed worlds.

We welcome the agreement related to the role of the Economic and Social Council in peacebuilding. We look forward to the Council's contribution in that area and to the Peacebuilding Commission's benefiting from it. We also welcome the reaffirmation of the Economic and Social Council's entitlement as a Charter body, which is so important to its ability to fulfil its mandate effectively.

In conclusion, I once again congratulate you, Madam President, on your leadership. I also thank the Co-Chairs, the ambassadors of Belgium and Mali, as well as the Facilitator, from the Mission of Mexico.

Mr. Miller (United States of America): While the Economic and Social Council, as a Charter body, is entitled to convene meetings as and when needed, the United States believes that it is important to stress that the Council should also ensure the efficient use of its session time, while working to fulfil its mandates effectively.

Our support for resolution 61/16 is thus contingent upon our understanding that the resolution has no financial implications. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management must be accorded flexibility and time for adequate planning in order to ensure that it can utilize existing resources, as noted in the Secretariat's statement.

My delegation would also like to emphasize that the resolution does not specify the number or frequency of meetings that should occur, nor does it require any additional meetings.

The President: We shall now proceed with the joint debate under agenda items 47, 112, 113 and 149.

Mr. Rosengren (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

In September 2005, heads of State gathered at the World Summit to assess the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and the progress made in implementing the Millennium Declaration and to find additional momentum for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). What is important is to embed the Goals into country-led processes in a manner which would eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth, environmental sustainability and global prosperity for all.

The EU is pleased that during the past year achievements have been reached in the United Nations reform process launched by the World Summit. In that regard, we would like to mention the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the work of the Informal Working Group on Mandate Review, the progress made so far on management reform and the follow-up by the General Assembly to the World Summit Outcome concerning the development and reform of the Economic and Social Council.

The EU would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (A/61/90). Through its annual consideration, the Economic and Social Council has made progress in implementing its commitments in the follow-up to the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs. The coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian fields and in fostering dialogue within the wider United Nations system was further discussed at the Council's 2006 substantive session.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome and its follow-up, the mandate of the Economic and Social Council to ensure follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits was reiterated. The EU strongly supports those developments and looks forward to the coming year, when new functions of the Council, especially the annual ministerial reviews, will be implemented.

As the 2005 Summit emphasized, development must be based on global partnership. The EU remains firmly committed to supporting country-led sustainable development through actions on aid volume and effectiveness, debt relief, innovative finance mechanisms, trade and the international institutions.

Respect for human rights — including economic, social and cultural rights — the rule of law, solid democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, good governance, sound economic policies and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation. The EU is committed to working towards the achievement of the MDGs, recognizing that they can only be attained if both women and men are able to play an equal part in all areas of life. As recognized in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit (resolution 60/1) development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

The EU welcomes the first report to the General Assembly on enhancing capacity-building in global public health (A/61/383). The EU believes that health is central to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and that such goals position health as a core part of the development agenda. We would therefore find it useful for this body to consider an assessment of global progress towards achieving improvements in health, highlighting the contributions of the United Nations system.

Despite our efforts, and although there have been impressive gains in human health worldwide in recent years, we are still in a situation where many countries are unable to cope with the burden posed by disease on their health systems, due to inherent weaknesses in national health systems, unpredictable and uneven funding and the dire lack of skilled human resources. Without skilled and motivated health personnel, any health sector intervention is bound to fail, placing at risk our current efforts to address avian flu and human influenza. We must therefore use opportunities, such as that offered by the current debate, to redouble our efforts to mobilize political commitment and to advocate for increased financial resources for the health sector.

The World Summit Outcome and last year's resolution 60/35, on capacity-building in global public health provided excellent guidance to Member States on how to improve health outcomes. In particular, we recall our commitments to increase investment, building on existing mechanisms and through partnerships to improve health systems in developing countries with the aim of providing sufficient infrastructures, management systems and supplies, as well as adequate numbers of health workers.

Last April, the EU adopted a Strategy for Action on the Crisis in Human Resources for Health in Developing Countries and is presently working on an action plan addressing that global issue.

The EU has supported pioneering work in research collaboration with developing countries in the field of health systems. It is essential that research and development in the area of health systems, and the rational, cost-effective and appropriate use of technologies, are supported and continued alongside the innovative creation of new compounds and technologies.

The EU welcomes the attention and proposals offered in the report to better respond to reproductive health issues. It is crucial to ensure universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment to all people, focusing especially on vulnerable groups. The scaling-up of support through the strengthening of social protection systems and the creation of opportunities for less susceptible livelihoods for affected households, particularly those with children, have a preventive effect and need to be part of the HIV/AIDS response. Development of paediatric drugs and coverage of treatment for children lags far behind what is available for adults.

Although we will not have a resolution on enhancing capacity-building in global public health this year, we reaffirm our commitment to the issue and our willingness to discuss health in a holistic manner in the General Assembly.

National ownership and leadership are the prerequisites for sustainable development results. In this regard there has been good progress at the national level, especially when it comes to introducing poverty reduction strategies. Progress has already been made in aligning United Nations development plans, the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework, with comprehensive national development strategies, in particular with the poverty reduction strategy. In this regard, it is also important to ensure the input of civil

society and private sector, as full national ownership requires broad-based engagement and participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, the EU is committed to working with the partners to find solutions to improve the United Nations system-wide coherence on the basis of the recommendations of the High-level Panel, which were recently made available. In this regard, the EU considers the interlinkages of development and humanitarian and environmental activities of high importance. The EU also intends to further improve the coherence of its own policies and activities affecting these issues.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the United Nations major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields is essential and must remain the priority role of the United Nations, if we are to succeed in eradicating poverty and in lifting billions of people out of dehumanizing and degrading poverty and hunger.

We are only six years into the twenty-first century, one third of the way to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of reducing poverty and hunger by half by 2015, and still, billions live in degrading poverty. If we are to succeed in fully implementing the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, then the full and timely implementation of all commitments made at all the United Nations summits and conferences must become a reality.

With the rapid progress of globalization and the continued uncertain prospects of a global economic recovery, the gap between the developed and developing countries is growing. This is increasing the imbalance in the global economic, financial and social architecture even further, once again in favour of the developed countries.

Therefore, for the Group of 77 and China, the critical target of 2015 set by our leaders in the Millennium Declaration to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is of paramount importance. The 2005 World Summit Outcome clearly stated that the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, would not be achieved, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, unless there is a dramatic and urgent increase in resource flows. This has never been more urgent than it is now.

There is an urgent need for concerted multilateral action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as a means for solving economic and social problems, for promoting peace and security and for the creation of an enabling international economic environment aimed at supporting developing countries' efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

The United Nations has a vital role to play in the promotion of an equitable global economic, financial and trading regime. In this regard, the United Nations system, and the international organizations and institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, must translate all commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields into concrete and specific actions aimed at achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 World Summit Outcome reminds us just how important this is.

The Group of 77 and China cannot overemphasize the need for the United Nations to play a fundamental role in the promotion of international cooperation for development, and in ensuring the coherence, coordination and implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including all actions agreed upon by the international community. This is to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system, in close cooperation with all other multilateral financial, trade and development institutions in order to support sustained economic growth, poverty and hunger eradication and sustainable development in developing countries.

The United Nations, therefore, has an important responsibility to assist Governments to stay fully engaged in the follow-up to and implementation of agreements and commitments reached at the major United Nations conferences and summits.

There is an urgent need, as called for in the development follow-up resolution (resolution 60/265), to fully implement the global partnership for development and enhance the momentum generated by the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in order to operationalize and implement, at all levels, the

commitments made in all the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits.

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China calls for the full implementation of the development follow-up resolution. It has clearly and succinctly outlined the actions that must be undertaken in the context of the implementation of all the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

The United Nations must start to monitor, track progress and review implementation of the internationally agreed development goals and the MDGs. Therefore, the United Nations system must, in accordance with the development follow-up resolution, strengthen the existing mechanisms and establish other effective mechanisms to monitor, review and follow up on the implementation of the outcomes of all the major United Nations conferences and summits as a matter of priority.

At today's adoption of the resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the Council's role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination in promoting the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits has been reaffirmed. It is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed to at the major United Nations conferences and summits, in accordance with the Charter.

With the adoption of the development follow-up and Economic and Social Council strengthening resolutions and in accordance with the mandate from our leaders, the United Nations has been reaffirmed as the central, fully inclusive, global, multilateral, international and representative organization responsible for development policies, review and progress and for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the United Nations major conferences and summits.

Our leaders, through the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits, have laid the necessary foundations for enhancing development — the substance is in its place. Commitments have been made; the systemic issues have already been already been agreed upon. All that is needed now is full and timely implementation. The Group of 77 and China therefore once again reiterates a call to developed countries for the full and timely implementation of the global partnership for development so as to enable developing countries to achieve the goals and targets of the internationally agreed objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, by 2015.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (ODED-GUAM), namely, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The GUAM States would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports.

The outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields have strengthened a common vision of development and a culture of responsibility in advancing those outcomes. Thus, integrated and coordinated follow-up in the implementation process is crucial to preserving the thematic unity and integrity of each conference while addressing the interlinkages among them. In this regard, we would like to recall General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 57/270 B, and we stress the importance of further progress in this regard.

Our States are committed to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and, for our part and in line with our commitments, we have adopted comprehensive national development strategies and pursued reform processes to accelerate our development and make such development sustainable. We stand ready to engage in a dialogue towards strengthening intergovernmental cooperation and interaction among United Nations agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

The GUAM States agree that progress has been slow in providing a road map toward system-wide coherence of the different follow-up mechanisms and in recognizing the need for all-encompassing development strategies that take into consideration the linkages between the conference results both within the United Nations system and at the governmental level. While commending the efforts of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the United Nations system at large to enhance inter-agency coordination and integration of internationally agreed development goals at both policy and

operational levels, we note the paramount importance of systematic inter-agency cooperation and of increasing strategic and operational coherence across all areas. The latter is even more relevant at the country level, and thus we look forward to further contributions from the United Nations Development Group towards promoting policy coherence through better utilization of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

The GUAM States are convinced that internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, should remain an overarching framework for international development cooperation and that the cooperation itself should be pursued in a spirit of global partnership for development. In that regard, we welcome the decision to launch the preparatory process to review the implementation of the outcomes of the International Conference on Financing for Development.

The 2005 World Summit sent a strong message that there is a continued need to promote an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits as well as to envisage tangible measures to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council as a principal body for coordination of the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

Mr. Pedroso (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as to put forward some considerations on this issue, which is of particular importance for developing countries.

Five years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), in which we committed ourselves to working for the famous — albeit modest — Millennium Development Goals, the so-called development agenda for our countries is far from becoming a reality because we continue to face enormous challenges and obstacles as a result of the neoliberal globalization process. Lasting solutions to issues addressed in the Monterrey Consensus, such as official development assistance (ODA), external debt, foreign direct investment and international trade continue to be a pipe dream today and, particularly for developing countries, continue to be truly critical.

Just a few figures will show this. Four fifths of humanity is living in conditions of underdevelopment and poverty. Of them, 1.3 billion are in extreme poverty and account for only 1.3 per cent of world consumption. The foreign debt of developing countries continues to grow, and last year reached the staggering figure of $2.8 trillion, an increase of 1.6 per cent from the previous year. In the case of the least developed countries, their foreign debt burden reached unprecedented levels. For every dollar devoted to the official development assistance, developing countries pay six dollars just for servicing their debt which we have already paid many times over. But this debt continues to mount. Developed countries spend an almost $1 billion daily on agricultural subsidies, which is three times more than they devote to ODA.

The number of persons with physical hunger has reached 852 million, and there are 876 million illiterate adults, whereas developed countries spend $17 billion a year on pet food. Every year, 8 million children die before their first birthday and 19 million children under the age of 5 die from curable diseases or from malnutrition. Another 325 million children do not go to school, while every year more than $1 trillion goes to commercial advertising. Sixty per cent of the world's ecosystems are being degraded or are unsustainably used. The availability of drinking water is 60 per cent of the 1970 levels, and at present we are 2.3 billion more human beings than at that time.

The persistence of an unfavourable international economic environment and an unjust world order have brought about this cruel and frightening panorama, increasingly marginalizing developing countries. Today, it is more necessary than ever that developed countries fulfil the commitments that they have undertaken at the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Development Goals. Those should no longer be treated as dead letter or mere political announcements aimed at diluting responsibilities or delaying their fulfilment.

If the negative effects of the imposition of the neoliberal model in a globalized world are not duly addressed, and the gap between the rich and the poor continues to increase, we will inevitably bear witness to further crises and conflicts.

With just 10 per cent of the more than $1 trillion currently devoted to military expenditure, the very

modest Millennium Goals could be achieved. Unfortunately, the industrialized world seems to be unaware of that fact and persists in its lack of political will to make historic decisions that would solve the structural inequalities of the international economic system, which is absolutely unsustainable.

The solution to the problems that the developing countries face today as a consequence of the unjust and unequal world economic order, and the preservation of nature and the human race itself, are issues that concern the entire international community, without distinction between rich and poor. It is imperative that we all work within the context of true multilateral international cooperation based on the principles of solidarity, complementarity and mutual benefits.

We need the steadfast political will of the richest countries to fulfil their commitments, which is undoubtedly the hugest challenge to overcome. Only then will we be able to guarantee a true and just global association for development.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We meet today to discuss the agenda item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields". Egypt attaches high priority to that item, and particularly to the issues of economic and social development, as they constitute the real measure of peoples' abilities to achieve the desired development and address the changes and fluctuations that prevail in today's world.

In that regard, I wish to express my support for South Africa's statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I also wish to affirm the developing countries' high regard for the United Nations role and mandate in economic and social development and other related fields. That vital role represents the lion's share of the United Nations activities, which cannot be substituted by any other role at any level, be it bilateral, regional or international. On that basis, we oppose any attempt to shift that role outside the United Nations to other realms dominated by politicization and conditionality, and we will work in coordination with developing countries to counteract any such attempt.

The adoption at the World Summit last June of the resolution on development follow-up (resolution 60/265) and the recent agreement on the draft resolution related to the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, following intensive negotiations on both texts, send a clear message and are proof of the strength of international political will in those two areas, especially on the part of developing countries, to preserve the mandate of the United Nations in the area of sustainable development in a context of intergovernmental oversight, which we seek to be characterized by just representation and democratic decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Despite international recognition of the important role of the United Nations in the field of development, many of the Organization's decisions and resolutions in the social and economic fields continue to go unimplemented.

Although we reached an agreed text after difficult negotiations on the draft resolution on the strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council — including its provision of a necessary time frame for the Council to assume the new duties entrusted to it, its stipulations regarding the activation of the development cooperation forums and the annual ministerial review, and its enhanced relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission — we look forward to increased political will from our development partners in order to help the Council to undertake its new duties in an optimal manner, in conjunction with activating the role of its other subsidiary organs, such as the technical committees, the regional commissions and the Committee for Development Policy.

With the adoption of the resolution on strengthening the Economic and Social Council based on the mandate given by the heads of State and Government at the 2005 Summit, it is important to stress the importance of activating the work of the essential subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council within the same framework. In that regard, we would refer in particular to the regional commissions, taking into account the regional perspective of the programmes they conduct and the exceptional technical and administrative expertise they provide, as well as the basis they represent for intergovernmental cooperation, which allows them to support the efforts of developing countries in the field of development. Accordingly, we support the activation and development of the commissions in order to counter efforts to reduce their role and terminate their mandate.

In that regard, Egypt endorses the content of the Secretary-General's report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B, including encouraging the interaction of regional commissions with the Economic and Social Council, increasing the contributions of the commissions within the Council's strengthened mandate, specifying obstacles of implementation and optimal practices, as well as deepening cooperation among the various regional commissions.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's report concerning the importance of activating and enhancing intergovernmental dialogue between the Economic and Social Council and the Breton Woods institutions. That dialogue should take into account the critical and pivotal activities of the important subsidiary bodies affiliated to the Council. The draft resolution's emphasis on strengthening the Economic and Social Council in that important relationship ushers in a new era of cooperation to the benefit of developing countries.

At the same time, we would like to express our support for the call in the Secretary-General's report for new and innovative approaches to encourage participation by civil society and the private sector in developing countries and for their participation in the preparation of and follow-up to the annual ministerial review and the development cooperation forums. The non-governmental sector has an important role to play in supporting development activities, but it must not supersede the role of Governments and should conform to the procedural and substantive rules of procedure that govern the work of the Economic and Social Council as an intergovernmental body.

In addition to making use of existing mechanisms, efforts should be directed towards enhancing and activating a number of instruments and themes whose implementation is considered equivalent to the implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences in the economic and social fields. Among those is the global partnership for development the thematic title of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, in addition to support for science and technology for development, and other thematic issues of high priority to developing countries, especially those in Africa.

The internationally agreed development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals, remain at the heart of the implementation of the United Nations outcomes and decisions in the relevant economic and social fields, as they embody a broad section of issues and challenges periodically addressed by United Nations conferences in that context. The modest progress achieved in this implementation to date and the anticipated failure of many developing countries to achieve MDG targets is strong evidence of the deficiencies still dominating the implementation follow-up process.

In this context, the delegation of Egypt would like to emphasize the importance of implementing the obligations contained in the development follow-up resolution, which affirms the increase in resources available to operational activities for development on a continued and predictable basis. This obligation has in fact not been translated into a real increase of resources, and that has adversely affected those activities and diminished their role in achieving the international development goals.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the real essence of the process of implementing United Nations decisions is embodied in the political will of Member States. The Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary mechanisms are only tools that reflect this will, which if absent will not lead to any progress. The developing countries are only demanding a just right to development, not only through assistance, but more importantly through creating an appropriate atmosphere and helpful circumstances conducive to the implementation of their development policies according to their priorities and needs. That would enhance their integration into the world economy as effective partners. It requires mutual trust among developing countries and their development partners in the developed world. It also necessitates the pursuit of common efforts to build and strengthen this trust and make optimal use of it.

Mr. Al-Shalhoub (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (A/61/90), as well as his note on the strengthening of the United Nations and the follow-up to the outcomes of the

Millennium Summit and reforming the United Nations (A/61/383).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia views this as a valuable opportunity to reaffirm the important role of the United Nations in handling the new developments, and challenges of the twenty-first century. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia associates itself with the views of the Group of 77 and China with regard to this issue.

The implementation of and follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits requires good intentions, as well as mutual trust between all partners, and an understanding of the interests of every party in an atmosphere of constructive dialogue, equality and mutual understanding. The five-year review of those conferences that is conducted by the United Nations is evidence of the care and efforts of Member States to garner broad support for the outcome of the United Nations conferences, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has participated effectively and positively in all United Nations summits and conferences. In affirmation of its genuine belief in the importance of international action and its keenness to enhance such comprehensive efforts, Saudi Arabia has joined many specialized organizations and ratified numerous international agreements and conventions that have been concluded with the encouragement of and under the sponsorship of the United Nations. Such action reaffirms Saudi Arabia's constant quest to give precedence to the language of dialogue and objectivity as a main characteristic of international efforts to entrench the concept of peace and security among peoples. This in turn would speed up the achievement of constructive cooperation, security and prosperity among all countries.

The enormous international changes and challenges that the international community is facing today require us, in the context of the reform approach that is prevailing at the United Nations, to reconsider the Organization's working methods and structure in order to enhance its abilities at peacemaking, not just peacekeeping. In this regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports reaching an international consensus on expanding the Security Council and increasing equitability of distribution and transparency in its work. Saudi Arabia also calls for activating cooperation between the organs of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Out of its conviction of the need to activate the work of the United Nations and to improve its performance and its organs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has participated effectively in current efforts aimed at modernizing and stimulating United Nations bodies in a manner that will enable them to assume their roles at a level commensurate with the new developments and changes that the world is experiencing today.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that the reform efforts that have taken hold of the United Nations must not be viewed in an abstract manner. Rather, they must be related to the issues that the United Nations deals with. In addition, we must take into account the impact of the reforms or changes on the effectiveness and performance of United Nations bodies — especially the Security Council, which is directly responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

There is no doubt that structural and organizational reforms with a view to raising the level of the Organization's performance and effectiveness are needed immediately, so that the United Nations can undertake its responsibilities and bear its burdens. This is all tied to the political will of States to effectively implement the principles, visions and expectations of the United Nations. Those responsibilities include a true commitment to the decisions and recommendations made by the United Nations and its conferences. Today more than ever, we need a United Nations that is effective and able to undertake its duties towards achieving international peace and security and sustainable development and guaranteeing human rights within the framework of respect for the characteristics of diverse cultures and societies.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that the dangers and problems that face the world today are not limited to only a few countries, since their effects and impact are comprehensive in nature. This requires that we consolidate the concepts of international cooperation, mutual interest and common responsibility in an atmosphere of respect, equality and trust in order to achieve humanity's hope for a better future. This should be based on joint interests and common benefits, as well as on narrowing the gap in quantity and quality between the countries of North

and South in the hope of creating one prosperous world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that there can be no true development or economic prosperity or political stability in just one part of the world while the rest of the world suffers from poverty, famine, wars and conflict. Moreover, resorting to force and violence in settling disputes has wasted considerable financial and human resources and has unnecessarily depleted natural resources. That has deepened economic and social underdevelopment, undermined human dignity, hindered development programmes and decreased the chances of achieving the MDGs by 2015, which has been decided. Moreover, it confirms the fact that there can be no development without stability and no stability without total respect for the principles of international law, the adoption of dialogue and the optimal utilization of economic resources for the interest of all peoples.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China): The Chinese delegation supports the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In 2005, world leaders gathered in New York and jointly reaffirmed that development is a central goal, thus reflecting the common aspiration of the people of the world to achieve that goal. World leaders have made solemn commitments to implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields and to realizing the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, in a timely manner. It is the unshirkable responsibility of all countries to maintain that momentum and to vigorously promote international development cooperation.

To achieve development involves a comprehensive and multifaceted process, and the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields will not materialize overnight. It is necessary to define key areas and set the order of priorities, so as to mobilize maximum resources, achieve the best distribution of efforts and achieve the most desirable result. Thanks to the joint efforts of all countries, the MDGs have received worldwide recognition and extensive support and their significance was reaffirmed by the World Summit in 2005. The focus of our attention should now be turned to full implementation of the MDGs.

Action at the national level is a pivotal link in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. There exists a wide spectrum of national conditions, and only by combining the consensus reached at international conferences with their own specific national conditions can countries truly claim ownership and thus act in an effective and relevant manner. National Governments have the responsibility to employ the results of international consensus in their national development strategies and to make those an organic part of their own development programmes.

At the regional and international levels, constructive dialogue should be encouraged to promote the exchange of experiences, stimulate new ideas and better mobilize resources and the technical means to support national efforts towards the coordinated implementation of their own development strategies.

It is essential for the United Nations to continue to lead discussions on follow-up actions. It is therefore necessary for the relevant United Nations meetings to be pragmatic and action-oriented in their agendas and find innovative ways of working. The related policy discussions should specify real policies, expand the consensus and find shortcomings and weaknesses, so as to better mobilize and coordinate international actions. There should be better communication and coordination among organizations and agencies to ensure policy coherence and avoid contradiction and overlapping.

Recent discussions on United Nations system-wide coherence have been very helpful. Worldwide attention and the extensive involvement of all social sectors are driving forces for international development cooperation. We should continue to encourage the private sector and civil society to play an important role in implementing development goals.

Effective global action needs the appropriate organizational guarantees. The Economic and Social Council, as the main organ within the United Nations system to promote economic and social development, has a special advantage when pushing for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. The 2005 World Summit provided the Economic and Social Council with two major new tools — annual ministerial substantive reviews and development cooperation forums. We hope that the Economic and Social Council and its subordinate

bodies will make good use of the opportunity to reinforce their functions and coordinate their work, so as to ensure coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the major conferences and summits. We are pleased to note that the draft resolution on strengthening ECOSOC has just been adopted (resolution 61/16).

Integrated and coordinated implementation calls for integrated and coordinated supervision. Currently, many agencies, both within and outside the United Nations system, have reviewed the progress made in achieving the development goals in their own specific field, using inconsistent standards with limited influence. The resolution on follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits again emphasized the importance of United Nations supervision and evaluation of progress in the implementation of development commitments. It is therefore necessary to establish a unified and comprehensive framework led by the United Nations for the evaluation of progress on the internationally agreed development goals. That would measure national progress and would also monitor and evaluate international cooperation and development aid.

China has been a vigorous supporter and practitioner in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. We have made unswerving efforts to give development top priority, pursue the people-oriented concept of scientific development, achieve comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable economic and social development and build a harmonious society. We have attached great importance to various international commitments, carefully learned from the success of other countries, absorbed useful concepts and methods and persisted in reform and innovation. As a result, the living standard of the Chinese people has improved by a fairly big margin, which has also contributed to the realization of internationally agreed global development goals.

Three out of eight MDGs are directly linked to health issues. The realization of other goals is also closely linked to the issue of public health. We have noted that all countries, especially the developing countries and countries in economic transition, are faced with grave challenges in the field of public health. We welcome the various strategies on public health capacity-building contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/383), including establishing an emergency response system and a global surveillance and response system in accordance with international health regulations, increasing public awareness, strengthening public health resources, and offering the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO) and related international agencies to Member States. The Chinese delegation urges all countries to give careful consideration to the relevant recommendations in the report and fully implement them on the basis of General Assembly resolution 60/35.

The Chinese Government has made the United Nations debates on public health a priority. Over the past three years, China has initiated each year the draft resolution on strengthening capacity-building in public health. China supports the work of WHO in related areas. We have carried out extensive cooperation with WHO, the World Bank and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation concerning HIV/AIDS, malaria, severe acute respiratory syndrome and the pandemic influenza, avian flu, which is highly pathogenic to humans as well as post-disaster rescue and treatment and disease control.

In recent years, the Chinese Government has invested enormously in public health capacity-building. In October this year, President Hu Jintao stressed the need to build a national basic medical care network covering both urban and rural residents, including improving public health and medical services, as well as disease prevention and control, public health supervision, emergency response to outbreaks of public health incidents, accelerating the development of medical undertakings in the western part and the rural areas of China, and reinforcing urban community medical services so as to achieve the goal of a basic health-care service that is enjoyed by all. That goal is in line with the goal of WHO — Health for All. China is ready and willing to work with other States to support the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other related agencies in enhancing capacity-building in the area of global public health.

Mr. Baba-Ahmed (Nigeria): Nigeria aligns itself with the statement of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77.

It is gratifying that the major United Nations conferences and summits have helped to shape our understanding and pursuit of development, while their various outcomes have provided the framework for

collective action. At the 2005 Summit, our leaders not only recognized the valuable role of those conferences and summits in mobilizing the international community, but also committed themselves to establish a just and lasting peace throughout the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. The integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields holds the key to the full realization of all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Barely two weeks ago, we exchanged views informally in this very Hall on the report of the Secretary-General's Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment. Consistent with what we Member States have long recognized, the Panel underscored the linkage between peace, development, security and the environment. An integrated, coordinated and holistic implementation is therefore necessary for the translation into concrete action of the lofty ideas and promises that have emerged from the major United Nations conferences and summits in order to fulfil the aspirations of the peoples we represent, especially the poor and vulnerable among them.

Our debate today must once again focus attention on the need for the full and timely implementation of and follow-up to our collective commitments entered into at the various conferences and summits. Fittingly, the internationally agreed development goals provide a yardstick to measure and evaluate progress using the instrumentality of the legislative mandates and intergovernmental processes at our disposal. Here, the role of the United Nations as the epitome of multilateralism, and in particular the Economic and Social Council, including its funds, programmes and functional commissions, cannot be overemphasized.

In his report (A/61/90) submitted to the Economic and Social Council and to the Assembly, the Secretary-General identified the opportunities as well as the challenges in the context of advancing progress in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. The role of the Council as the central body for coordination, policy review and dialogue on development cooperation will no doubt need to be strengthened. The agreement reached on the final text of draft resolution A/61/L.24 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council paves the way for that process. Nigeria is pleased that Member States were able to reach consensus on that important resolution and hopes that speedy measures will be to taken to give effect to its broad provisions in order to enable the Council to perform its expanded functions.

The new architecture approved in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document regarding the annual ministerial review and Development Cooperation Forum is a challenge to us all. We need to significantly change the way we do things and aim to achieve better results. We must work vigorously and deliberately to promote greater convergence between intergovernmental processes and United Nations system activities for development. It is only by so doing that we can accelerate the implementation and realization of the objectives of internationally agreed development goals, secure coherence in policies and promote a global partnership for development.

Indeed, while resolutions 50/227 and 57/270 B define the parameters for follow-up to the various United Nations conferences and summits, Nigeria shares the Secretary-General's view that progress has been slow in adopting an all-encompassing development strategy that takes into account the linkages between the different conference outcomes. Without a doubt, there is a linkage between the issues that have emerged from the various conferences and summits. The international community must not just pay lip service to the notion of a shared vision of development, but must act in unison in pursuit of a common goal, that is, the provision of a better life for all peoples, as envisioned in the Charter.

Nigeria looks forward to Member States working with the United Nations system to promote development as a universal goal. In that regard, cross-sectoral rather than sectoral strategies will be required to address issues that cut across the major United Nations conferences and summits. In the same way, efforts must be made to enable the various elements of the United Nations system to deliver as one. It was with a view to promoting such an approach that Nigeria built and donated the United Nations House in Abuja in order to bring the various United Nations entities under one roof. We are not, however, unmindful of the challenges and difficulties inherent in having one United Nations country team, one country

programme, one budget and one leader. We hope that the discussions and negotiations that will soon ensue in the Assembly will help to identify ways to meet the challenges and surmount the difficulties.

It is paramount that concrete action be taken to help countries achieve the goals and targets of their nationally owned and driven development strategies. The first session of the annual ministerial review, for instance, will undoubtedly reveal that six years after the Millennium Summit, sub-Saharan Africa is not on course to achieve the MDGs. Rather, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty on the continent is on the increase. Similarly, there has been a steady increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other communicable and non-communicable diseases.

As the continent grapples with its myriad challenges, Africa's capacity to pull itself up by its own bootstraps is severely constrained by, inter alia, its excruciating debt burden, lack of market access, poor infrastructure and limited capital flows. Though the various measures and initiatives taken — such as the provision of debt relief, increased official development assistance and greater engagement by development partners with the continent — are commendable, more needs to be done to meet the special and peculiar needs of Africa. That is an area in which Nigeria hopes the biennial Development Cooperation Forum will help keep Africa on the global radar and mobilize the requisite resources for the implementation and realization of the internationally agreed development goals, as well as the objectives of Africa's flagship initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Reporting on our activities, assessing results, sharing experiences — including best practices and challenges — in a coherent manner will influence the strategies, policies and tools we use for the implementation of and follow-up to our commitments. The United Nations system, especially its functional commissions, funds and programmes, including the regional commissions and other relevant regional institutions, must assist in implementation and follow-up activities. In that regard, Nigeria is concerned that although the functional commissions are playing crucial roles in relation to the follow-up to conferences, cooperation between them is limited and progress in ensuring linkages in the processes is insufficient.

A weak United Nations cannot adequately serve the cause of development. We recognize that the United Nations is, essentially, a service provider and a chief advocate. Member States are the financiers, policymakers and consumers of its services. Its strength, therefore, depends to a large extent on the investment that we make in it.

In that regard, Nigeria believes that it is our collective Charter obligation to provide resources sufficient for the implementation of all mandates that Member States have entrusted to the Secretary-General and his team. These reforms must cut across all the principal organs of the United Nations in order to make the Organization more efficient, effective and responsive to current challenges. Furthermore, the reforms must not be viewed from the narrow perspective of cost-cutting. Rather, we should examine carefully all the measures called for and agree on the need to allocate new resources, where necessary, for their full implementation.

Nigeria also believes that the success of any Secretariat and management reform depends on transparent accountability measures anchored in an efficient internal system of administration of justice. Moreover, the reforms must be supportive of, rather than detrimental to, the United Nations development agenda in its totality. In that regard, resources must be provided for the full implementation of all agreed reform activities, including those in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Similarly, the Secretariat and other entities within the United Nations system should reflect in their composition, at all levels, the international character of the Organization.

Nigeria supports the strengthening of the General Assembly and the focusing of its agenda on global priorities and substantive issues of the day. We share the view that the position and role of the President of the General Assembly need to be strengthened. We are studying carefully the division of labour between the General Assembly — essentially its Second and Third Committees — and the Economic and Social Council. In determining our position, we will take into account the lessons learned from the findings on how the Economic and Social Council performs its expanded functions.

Nigeria's position on reform of the Security Council is very well known. Suffice it to say that reform of the Council to make its decisions more

legitimate and transparent is overdue and urgent. Reforms at the United Nations would be incomplete without expanding the size and composition of the permanent membership of the Security Council.

Representation for Africa in that category is necessary to achieve inclusiveness and give effect to the wishes and aspirations of the people of the African continent. Indeed, Africa occupies centre stage in the Security Council's activities and thus needs to contribute its perspective to the work of the Council. Nigeria thus calls for concrete efforts to reform the Security Council and, in particular, to give Africa representation in the permanent Council membership.

In the final analysis, we will bear responsibility in the court of humanity for the actions that we take, or fail to take, to promote better standards of life in larger freedom for the peoples of the world.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus): The delegation of Belarus welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiating process on a resolution of the utmost importance: that on strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. We commend the tireless efforts of the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Johan C. Verbeke of Belgium and Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali, to bring us to the remarkable outcome of the consultations.

It gives us great pleasure to note that this resolution contains a number of important provisions and ideas that could enhance the potential of the Economic and Social Council to improve coordination within the United Nations system and to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations efforts to support the progress made by developing countries and countries with transitional economies in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, thus promoting economic growth and social progress throughout the world.

We would like to highlight just a few of those ideas, such as adopting a ministerial declaration as an outcome of the high-level segment of the substantive session; providing an opportunity for countries to make voluntary national presentations within the framework of annual ministerial-level substantive reviews; establishing a multi-year programme of work for the ministerial-level substantive reviews, and convening ad hoc meetings of the Economic and Social Council on humanitarian emergencies. Belarus was an active advocate of those important elements of Council reform during the entire negotiating process. We are pleased to see them in the resolution.

What is also significant is that the resolution is an important step towards ensuring appropriate financial and administrative support for the work of the Economic and Social Council to facilitate the fulfilment of its newly assigned responsibility for organizing the annual ministerial reviews and the Development Cooperation Forum, as well as to hold ad hoc meetings.

We believe in the strengthened Economic and Social Council. We believe in its ability to effectively organize the international support so needed by countries fighting against poverty, hunger, social inequality, environmental degradation, vulnerability to natural disasters and dangerous infectious diseases. As a member of the Council for the term 2007-2009, Belarus will do its best to contribute significantly to the successful fulfilment of the Council's tasks.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): First of all, through you, Madam President, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/90) on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B. In that context, Indonesia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, especially in welcoming the adoption of resolution 61/16, on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

Time and again, we have discussed the issue of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. However, the truth of the matter is that one third of the world's population still lives in poverty. We need to make progress.

It is in that context that we welcome the adoption of the long-awaited resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, which will enable the Council to perform its role in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolution 60/1, especially paragraph 155. It will also enable the Council to start adapting the organization of its agenda and methods of work. In that way, the

Council will be in a better position to facilitate and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Furthermore, the Council is also now better equipped to address the current challenges of development, particularly on issues related to poverty; malnutrition and hunger; such pandemic diseases as avian influenza, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and polio; and natural disasters.

In our view, by maintaining the current segmented structure of its substantive session, the work of the Economic and Social Council will not be disrupted. Meanwhile, the convening of the biennial high-level development cooperation forums and annual ministerial substantive reviews as part of the high-level segment will strengthen the Economic and Social Council to ensure integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

We also support the reaffirmation of the role of the Economic and Social Council in providing overall coordination and guidance so as to ensure coherence and avoid the duplication of mandates and activities among United Nations funds and programmes. We also welcome the recognition of the important link between the work of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

As one of the countries affected by the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, we are encouraged to note that, by this resolution, the Economic and Social Council will have a more enhanced role in addressing humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters, upon the request of affected Member States. That will help to raise awareness and promote the engagement of all stakeholders in support of international relief efforts.

My delegation looks forward to the implementation of the spirit and letter of the resolution. Therefore, it is also critically important to ensure that the Economic and Social Council, as a Charter body, receives sufficient provision of conference services and substantive support to perform its functions, including its newly assigned responsibilities, as mandated by the 2005 World Summit.

Mr. Sen (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

We have to ensure the dialectic of the implementation of those conferences in order to look at the outcomes in a coordinated way and, at the same time, to follow the individual outcomes of each conference. That is something that has been on the United Nations agenda for a long time, and indeed General Assembly resolution 57/270 B also clearly emphasizes the need for such coordinated and integrated follow-up and implementation.

The primary element here, as we can see from the agenda item of the debate itself, is the issue of implementation. That, I think, is the sine qua non of everything in the item, because, incidentally, the issue of implementation has also been on the agendas of both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for some time, and is emphasized in resolution 57/270 B. It was also emphasized in the World Summit outcome that we all know and, more recently, in General Assembly resolution 60/265 on development, which emphasizes the need to implement the global partnership for development — which, incidentally, is also encapsulated in Millennium Development Goal 8.

Apart from implementation, what are the key issues that confront us here? As far as we can see, implementation has also to be interpreted broadly to include resources, because resources are the key. We touched on some of those issues when the resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council was adopted earlier this morning.

Apart from that, we clearly need to look at the world outside and at the developments that are taking place in the economic and social fields outside, because that which is unclear has to be made clear. That which is partial has to be made complete, and that can be done only in terms of implementation in the context of a close examination of what is happening outside in the real world.

Last but not least, we need to take up the unfinished agenda of United Nations reform. The global economy today is characterized, on the one hand, by multinational corporations, whereby production takes place in several countries, as we all know, and, on the other, by financial exchanges and transfers that have totally outstripped the exchange of

real goods and services. The Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have become the global framework, the institutional base, for those transactions, which are often simply a search for speculative profits. Those profits are underpinned by the rules of many of those international institutions. Therefore, we need to look at the policies of those institutions. It is in that context that we emphasize the need for the Economic and Social Council to carry out its mandate by periodically assessing international economic policies, including the policies of those institutions.

We all know, to take one example, that the International Monetary Fund has diverged greatly, just as the WTO has, from the original Keynesian mandate. Today, we have a situation in which it has been involved in countries on the eve of civil conflict, and they have in fact plunged deeper into conflict. It has offered bail-out packages in crises, but those packages have not bailed out the beneficiaries and have, in fact, sometimes made the crisis worse. On the other hand, we also need to examine, as several economists have maintained, the equity of having a bail-out package for international banks and for the rich, but not for those who are living on subsidized food.

Similarly, I think that, in the case of the WTO, we have a situation in the world in which — as we saw quite clearly at Doha — the entire consensus is that we should look at borders as not being important for the free exchange of goods and the free exchange and movement of services. But when it comes to labour or technology flows, we are told a different story. That is one of the reasons that Doha failed.

Similarly, we are told that subsidies are a very bad thing in the industrial sector, but it is quite a different story when it comes to agricultural subsidies. The property and patent rights of the holders of intellectual property rights are sacred, but when it comes to defending the interests of the biodiversity of developing countries, then again it is another story. When it comes to protecting their biogenetic resources, we are told that we have to wait awhile. Therefore, if implementation is to be worthwhile and if the build-up that we require on the outcomes of these conferences is to have meaning, then they must be geared to the real world outside.

That is also true in the case of the question of employment. The third pillar of the original Bretton Woods triad was the International Trade Organization (ITO). Its agenda stated clearly that we need to look not only at getting prices right or liberalizing trade as a means of maximizing welfare, but also at positive action on employment itself, without which we cannot really have an outcome which would be in the interest of the broad majority of the world.

Similarly, in this context, it is very important that we also look at the implementation of the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, because there are any number of developing countries, in particular in Africa, where there is simply not the physical infrastructure or the institutions necessary for attracting private investment. To talk of private enterprise in this context is thus as irrelevant as to talk of private enterprise in, for example, the context of pickpockets. A pickpocket is also a champion of private enterprise. Bringing in major corporations is simply to endow the pickpocket with some of the virtues of a pirate; this does not really help. Therefore, I think the question of implementation and of clarifying what is unclear and building on what has been done has to be seen in the context of these developments in the real world.

Similarly, the Economic and Social Council that we have set up has the resources, and we hope that these resources will not simply be based continually and forever on savings elsewhere so that there are no implications calling for extra resources. But ultimately, if the Economic and Social Council is truly to do some of these things and if it is to be a Charter body in the real sense of the word, then, quite clearly, future budgeting would have to look at this issue very carefully. We are also happy about the Council's role on issues of post-conflict resolution, which is something that will be of great benefit to many developing countries.

In the case of the reform of management, we find that some of the reports commissioned at great cost have once again brought in discredited ideas like governance. In fact, if you look at it, that is the greatest encroachment of all, because it is an attempt, through governance, to recreate the General Assembly and its Fifth Committee in the image of the Security Council, where there exists the dominance of a few.

I believe that, in implementing the outcomes, we need to bear some of those aspects in mind.

With regard to the General Assembly itself, which is the main Charter body and the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations, we have said many times that the Assembly must be reinvested with the powers that it has under the Charter. There has to be an equitable and fair balance among the different organs: the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Now, one may say that part of the reason why the General Assembly has weakened is the encroachment, but then one needs to ask why the encroachment exists. Encroachment takes place because so far the General Assembly has really concentrated on procedural measures in large part, rather than on substantive measures. Therefore, as part of the implementation, it is also necessary to implement resolution 60/286, adopted at the sixtieth session on the revitalization of the General Assembly. This implementation would be a part of the revitalization itself.

But, again, this revitalization is something that would not be complete until substantive issues were addressed. For this, there is a clear case for once again setting up the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly so that issues such as peace and security, development, management, including human resources management, and the codification and development of international law are taken up in a manner that is in the interest of all the countries in this Organization.

Last but not least, I think I mentioned the question of the unfinished agenda. Here, it is important to take up the reform of the Security Council itself as well. We do not look upon this in terms of power at all. It is not a question of power, but of public reason and equity, and not necessarily a question of politics, but of ethics, because without reform of the Security Council, we would have a reform that was like *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. It would not touch the essential correlations of power, and without that, the outcome will not be optimal. We currently have a situation where there is one veto in the International Monetary Fund and five vetoes in the Security Council without any kind of countervailing power vested in other countries to bring a measure of optimality into the decision-making. Without that, we will not be able to ensure even that economic decision-making is optimal, let alone political or social decision-making.

India has always maintained that we need an equitable, a fair and just balance between the Security Council and the General Assembly. We need a Security Council which, for the sake of its own interests, rests on a broad base of support in the General Assembly. For this, the General Assembly must be strong. In another forum, I recently paraphrased some words of Robespierre which are relevant here — that power without virtue is pernicious but virtue without power is impotent. We therefore request this balance to have truly optimal decisions, and to have genuine, integrated and coordinated implementation of outcomes of conferences. Otherwise, the only follow-up to conferences will be to have more conferences. If we are to avoid this, such balance is necessary, and for that some practical will is important. Ultimately, it is a question of political will. Political will is necessary to transform any thought or idea into the practical energy of reform. This is the only law of thermodynamics that the United Nations needs.

It was a citizen of our host country and the first United Nations official to get a Nobel Peace Prize, Ralph Bunche, who said, if I remember correctly, that the United Nations has no vested interest in the status quo. We thus cannot allow vested interests to ensure that we remain committed to the status quo. We have to overcome this and move beyond the status quo to create a real institution that would make the United Nations once again a part of and a rallying point for the vast majority of countries, in fact for all the countries in the world.

To end, I would like to cite some of the very moving words that were used at a conference in New Delhi recently, we do not look upon our work as something couched in the framework of power, but as something that is couched in the framework of international justice and equity. Therefore, in applying these words, we need to work for a United Nations that is not dominated by division, power and military might, but a United Nations that genuinely becomes a global force for peace, prosperity and progress.

The President: In accordance with resolution 57/32, of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): Because of the lateness of the hour, I will shorten my statement. However, the full text will be distributed in the Hall.

I am pleased to address the General Assembly on agenda item 112, which relates to strengthening the United Nations system. It will come as no surprise that

I will refer to this theme from the perspective of the consolidated parliamentary dimension of the work of the United Nations. As resolution 61/6, adopted by consensus in this Hall on 20 October, attests, the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) are working together on virtually every item on the agenda for peace, democracy and development. The concern with democracy, in particular, is central to our joint action, as we saw very recently in Doha at the sixth International Conference on New and Restored Democracies.

Democracy, together with development, is the best defence against conflict and the best guarantee for lasting peace. The recent memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Democracy Fund and the IPU, and the close consultations under way with the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, augur well for increased cooperation in this area for the years to come.

The resolution also calls for the further development of the annual parliamentary hearing and other specialized parliamentary meetings at the United Nations, as joint United Nations-IPU events. The formal recognition of the joint nature of those events will require the United Nations to take partial ownership of them, and eventually fully integrate them into the overall agenda and meeting schedule of the United Nations.

Moreover, resolution 61/6 states, in paragraph 8, that the IPU is now invited to be more closely involved in the elaboration of system-wide strategies for consideration by the United Nations "with a view to ensuring greater and more coherent support by parliaments to the work of the United Nations". That provision will help us to improve the coordination of our respective operational activities so that we can better support each other in the field. It will also help us to plan future activities in the light of the recommendations that may come out of the annual hearing and other specialized meetings.

How does this relate to the strengthening of the United Nations system? First and foremost, let me remind the Assembly what we mean by the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations. That dimension must be forged by parliaments and their members. It has to be firmly rooted in the activities that parliaments carry out at the national level — at home. It includes action by parliaments to contribute to and monitor international negotiations and debates at the United Nations and in related agencies, to oversee the enforcement of what is adopted by Governments and to ensure national compliance with international norms and the rule of law. It also involves scrutinizing the activities of the United Nations and providing input for their deliberations.

The IPU is convinced that members of parliaments can play an extremely important role in building national political support for international action. In the IPU's view — which is shared by many United Nations Member States — the United Nations stands to gain considerably by making sure that parliaments and their members have a full and undistorted understanding of major processes and activities under way at the United Nations. We have put forward a series of proposals relating to how we believe this can be best achieved.

The 2006 parliamentary hearing held at the beginning of last week in the Economic and Social Council Chamber was, we feel, a very positive indication that that is, indeed, possible. The meeting benefited from the tremendous interest of national parliaments, which were well represented. It also drew in many representatives from the Permanent Missions, including Permanent Representatives, as well as United Nations officials and representatives of academia. There was a substantive and interactive discussion of issues that are high on the United Nations agenda — conflict prevention, peacebuilding, good governance and the fight against corruption — which resulted in a number of proposals for action by parliaments at the national level, in support of United Nations initiatives. The results of the hearing will be circulated at the United Nations in the coming weeks, as an official document of the General Assembly.

I would like to provide just one example of what came out of the hearing. Participating legislators very much welcomed the opportunity to learn about the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and its mandate and operational expectations. They stressed the need for the Commission to focus in particular on the institution of parliament. All too often in the past, they argued, the international community invested huge amounts of resources and funds in preparing for free and fair elections, only to abandon almost immediately the very institution that was born out of the respective elections.

Parliament, I think we all agree, is the forum designed to bring together all the various groups within society, and work within parliament therefore provides a very real alternative to war. But a new, embryonic parliament does not run itself; it needs to be nurtured, and — in the early years, at least — it needs to receive as much assistance as possible, first and foremost from the international community.

In discussing the Peacebuilding Commission, participants repeatedly stressed the need for adequate financing of the Peacebuilding Fund, and pledged to take that message back home to their capitals, with a view to building greater political support for the Fund. More generally, they felt that parliaments could play an important role in bridging the divide between peacebuilding and development assistance. They called attention to the danger of relapse into conflict, which should not be ignored. They emphasized the crucial importance of involving women in all aspects of the peacebuilding exercise, and pledged to play a more proactive role in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In particular, they argued strongly in favour of placing democratically elected parliaments high among the priorities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

Those are just some of the ways in which the IPU intends to continue to work in the years to come, and in so doing help strengthen the United Nations system.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 47, 112, 113 and 149.

Agenda item 150

International Year of Reconciliation, 2009

Draft resolution (A/61/L.22)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.22.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The world today is one in which many actors and forces intersect. It is a world where new problems and contradictions are emerging and old ones are reappearing, where conflicts of all kinds arise as a result of a variety of causes, where environmental crisis seems inevitable and where the scourges of hunger and pandemics afflict all of our peoples. Proclaiming 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation is a way of seeking universal reconciliation, on the basis of solidarity, brotherhood and the enshrined values and principles of freedom, justice, peace, non-discrimination, democracy, development and human rights — the very pillars that support the United Nations.

If we proclaim reconciliation as the path leading to the achievement of world peace, we should say that reconciliation means restoring humanity's lost unity — particularly today, when human societies are fractured or deeply divided and afflicted by extreme poverty or confronted by territorial or ethnic conflicts.

We understand that, and we therefore propose reconciliation, in the sense of seeking and establishing new paradigms for human coexistence and understanding. It is impossible to exist without others, and it is always possible to live in peace with others.

We see this proposal to proclaim 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation as an initiative that is appropriate for the sphere of international relations and relations between States, nations, peoples, cultures and individuals. Such an exercise requires that we consider forgiveness, truth, justice and mercy, as maintained by the most seasoned experts on peaceful conflict settlement. However, as long as we continue to believe that war is the means to achieve peace, humanity — which is no longer an abstract entity — will suffer its present ills and others that are even worse. Thus, we will be plunged into darkness and barbarity.

Reconciliation results from putting into practice ethics and superior values as opposed to petty interests. It involves making the common good and human dignity the cornerstone of development. Reconciliation means analysing and overcoming the causes of violence and oppression and the origins of the problems and threats facing humanity. It also results from criticizing our own culture and way of thinking, which are inclined to be bellicose or self-centred. Here, reconciliation poses a challenge.

That is why we believe that the perspectives of all world views, world religions, political systems, peoples and individuals can contribute to world reconciliation through activities, plans and programmes that will ultimately create conditions for

greater unity among human beings. Only if we are united can we confront the problems that are common to everyone, although not caused by everyone, such as the grave ecological crisis already affecting millions of human beings.

Thus, through systematic and practical reconciliation, promoted by States and citizens, we can carry out concrete actions needed in any society — in keeping with their history and culture. Reconciliation between States in conflict, between Governments and citizens, between genders, between generations, between men and women, between human beings and nature, between religions, ethnic groups and cultures, between the North and the South, between developed countries and poor countries without access to technology — that is the essence of reconciliation in a world where antagonisms, ruptures and discord could lead to our demise.

For the supreme value of peace — a gift that is obtained not through military victories but through a life of brotherhood and justice — this initiative to declare 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation is vital. We propose that it be celebrated with energy and vitality by all nations of the world. It has been supported by the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations, established by the United Nations; the World Forum of Civil Society Networks; the World Council of Churches; the Polytechnic University of Nicaragua's Martin Luther King Institute for Social Research and Action, which is a network of civil society organizations working for a culture of peace in the world; and many other entities of world civil society.

On behalf of the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritius, Panama, the Philippines, Rwanda and my own country, Nicaragua, I ask that members support this initiative, draft resolution A/61/L.22, entitled "International Year of Reconciliation, 2009", which has seven preambular paragraphs and three operative paragraphs.

The first preambular paragraph recalls the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which we consider to be highly relevant to reconciliation processes, including bringing about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes.

In the second preambular paragraph, it is recognized that reconciliation processes are particularly necessary and urgent in countries and regions of the world which have suffered or are suffering situations of conflict that have affected and divided societies in their various internal, national and international facets.

The third preambular paragraph recognizes the many activities carried out by the United Nations system and the international community in diverse areas that lead to the initiation and development of reconciliation processes.

In the fourth preambular paragraph, the Assembly expresses its awareness that dialogue among opponents from positions of respect and tolerance is an essential element of peace and reconciliation.

The fifth preambular paragraph states that the Assembly is also aware that truth and justice are indispensable elements for the attainment of reconciliation and lasting peace.

The sixth preambular paragraph recalls the role of the media in reporting on reconciliation processes.

The seventh and last preambular paragraph expresses the Assembly's conviction that the declaration of an International Year of Reconciliation at the end of the first decade of the new Millennium will provide the international community with the opportunity to pursue, with the active involvement of all stakeholders, efforts to develop reconciliation processes, which are necessary to and a condition for the establishment of firm and lasting peace.

In operative paragraph 1, the Assembly expresses its steadfast determination to pursue reconciliation processes in those societies that are affected and/or divided by conflicts.

In operative paragraph 2, the Assembly decides to proclaim 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation.

Finally, in operative paragraph 3, the Assembly invites concerned Governments and international and non-governmental organizations to support reconciliation processes among affected and/or divided societies and to plan and implement adequate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of reconciliation, including holding conferences and seminars and disseminating information about the issue.

We hope that this draft resolution will not have any financial implications for the United Nations and that it will be adopted by consensus. Many personalities, peace scholars, universities and national civil societies have expressed to us their support, acceptance and approval regarding this proposal of reconciliation for the year 2009.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/61/L.22. I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Chile has joined the list of sponsors.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.22?

Draft resolution A/61/L.22 was adopted (resolution 61/17).

The President: I should like to thank the interpreters for their patience and cooperation.

I shall now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Ms. Escobar-Gómez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Venezuela wishes to make a statement of position following the adoption of the draft resolution.

We welcome Nicaragua's commendable initiative in submitting the draft resolution, whose goal is the promotion of peace through the proclamation of the year 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation.

We would like to make an interpretive statement on the sixth preambular paragraph of the resolution relating to the role of the media.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, certain media, abusing their total freedom of expression, have been manipulating public opinion and poisoning the minds of certain sectors of the Venezuelan population — all of this in conjunction with certain sectors of the United States of America, which have gone to the extreme of calling for the assassination of our President, Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías.

The case of Venezuela is not unique. The inappropriate and anti-democratic use of means of communication represents the greatest threat to freedom of expression and to reconciliation.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 150?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to inform members of some revisions to the programme of work of the General Assembly. At the request of the sponsors, consideration of agenda item 15, "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic", has been postponed to a later date. Consideration of agenda item 27, "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", originally scheduled for Monday, 4 December 2006, has been postponed to Thursday morning, 7 December 2006, as the second item.

Consideration of agenda item 110, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", also originally scheduled for Monday, 4 December, has been postponed until Tuesday morning, 12 December. On Wednesday afternoon, 6 December, the General Assembly will take up the report of the First Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.